

# DESIDERATA REGARDING RESEARCH ON MUSIC IN EXILE

## INTRODUCTION

This study of exiled and persecuted musicians takes into account unpublished work by Rathkolb and Haag, a recently edited book by Pass & Scheit & Svoboda, data collected by the *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* in journals 4/1988 and 12/1988, by Traber and Weingarten 1987, data from research done on the cultural transfer of European art music to Japan (Suchy 1992) and from personal interviews.

The group of people investigated have the following in common:

- Those who are musicians they were professionally trained in music.
- At the time of emigration they had completed their studies or were just about to complete their studies.
- An activity related to music was a central focus in their lives but not necessarily the main income. In order to evaluate and appreciate the contribution of amateur musicians to musical life in their guest countries so-called amateur musicians have been included.
- Austrian research on exiled musicians includes biographies pertinent to Austria today and in the past, before and after emigration. This wide framework does not claim all persons listed as Austrian.
- Personal emigration and political persecution is documented as early as it can be traced back but not as late as it cannot be longer denied.
- Research is not limited to musicians but includes all persons that are connected to the music business.

## FIRST DESIDERATUM:

### DESIRE FOR COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

Since research began in Austria in 1975 with a symposium organized by the documentation archives of Austrian resistance, research on Austria's musical exile has multiplied the names from less than 200 to more than 700. Even if all the names were recorded research would not be complete. Completeness is not the final aim of research but seems to be an act of respect or—as seen from a Jewish point of view—a ritual act. Quantity and quality of cultural exodus are tasks for research. The more detailed in facts and musical materials biographies are documented the more significance and meaning they acquire. Karl Oskar Alwin gains prominence by the fact that he accompanied Jan Kiepura, Julius Brammer as a librettist of Edmund Eysler, Ernst Engel as an accompanist of the Comedian Harmonists, etc.

No reason should be strong enough—neither financial considerations nor scepticism regarding the aims—to leave the project uncompleted. If there is no other purpose than bringing honor to a group of persons who were tortured this work is justified. Let us compare Austrian signs of commemoration plaques to each other. If one takes the marble plates which name every single soldier killed in World War II as a standard of commemoration, the exiled and persecuted persons at least deserve the same symbols. It has been stated repeatedly that many names of Austrian streets and places are named after Nazi-protegees (e.g. Schandor 1994). Rarely has the chance for commemoration been used to name streets after Nazi victims.

That the expulsion of musical art did not end with the Nazi regime is a scandalous fact of post-war cultural Austria. Not only the victim—like Georg Eysler (Eysler 1990) concerning his mother (**Fig. 103** *Georg Eysler and his mother*,



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Vienna 1946)—but also the musicologist has the right to be outraged on discovering destruction of documents—tapes, records. It is only just to compare the efforts made to archive biographical documents of exiled musicians to that of non-persecuted ones—e.g. Charlotte Eisler-Demant to Herbert von Karajan.

Research on Austrian exile by Austrian musicologists demands that the researcher makes clear where he/she stands. He/she should refrain from identification with the object of research. On the other hand he/she becomes a speaker for people whose voices were suppressed. He/she has to be aware of the fact to find knowledge some people are not interested in being published.

It should go without saying that any attempt to discredit the researcher and his work by denouncing him through personal accusations totally unrelated to his work—e.g. "leftist" or "communist"—are obsolete.

## SECOND DESIDERATUM:

### INTERPRETATION OF DATA

A careful interpretation of statistics furnishes evidence about the extent of cultural emigration which involves much more than the persecution of artists. Musical life is more than a record of events, a list of performed works. The loss of culture and cultural life also implies the loss of an audience and the vanishing of extra-musical factors. Musical genres lost their audiences through exile which as a result changed the actual musical thrust of presentation or made it a museum relict—in the case of the "Comedian Harmonists".

A correlation of emigration countries and musical professions could tell us something about the attempts made by some host countries to accommodate and use musical professionals in exile. An exact interpretation of education and teaching content, the later emigrants received in Austria, tells us about the tradition they carried to their host countries. What musical features, composition styles and teaching methods, which musical genres emigration helped to keep up and which musical traditions had to be abandoned by musicians in order to make living?

Such questions are essential for the continuation of culture in the countries of immigration and for a documentation of the Austrian loss. The closer we move to the present the more politically explosive this research becomes. Analyzing the reasons and failures for remigration confronts decision-makers in Austria's post-war musical life with their reasons for either avoiding or promoting the careers of remigrants.

What are the characteristics of remigration? Under which conditions were remigrants welcome? Which biographical characteristics hindered remigration—e.g. being a member of the communist party, lacking personal contacts. Was their certain musical profession—e.g. conductors rather than composers—less welcome than others? (Fig. 104 *Hanns Eisler with his wife on his return from USA in Vienna, April 1948*)

## THIRD DESIDERATUM:

### ABANDONING THE FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES

The biographical investigation and research demands a clear interpretation of the researcher. Some power is needed to ignore the resistance built up against personal questions and a scientific interpretation of facts. The often heard argument the researcher has not experienced musical life in Nazi-times, was already refuted by Hannah Arendt. Publication of documents is not enough. Only by making clear how the researcher himself explains the situation, scientific publication provides arguments for discussion. Musicologists have the duty to explain their consternation and their position.

Taking into consideration that time for any legal persecution for the ones committing the crimes, the only legal consequence can be compensation for the victims.

Asking questions often is seen as an accusation and an insult. However, so-called consideration for the descendants of victims and the ones who took advantage of the situation tries to distort, to soften and rounden up biographies. In case of what Gerhard Scheit calls "biological coming to terms with the past" some authors consider time late enough for historical coming outs.

Still, as late as now, revealing data on persecuted persons cries for com-



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pensation. Possibly, victims and their children demand remunerations and rights they were deprived of. The reserved attitude towards documentation of exile as can be observed at official art-institutions might be connected to fear for remunerations, for political consequences, finally for accusations of those taking advantage of the situation.

Considering development towards the legal recognition of Roma and Sinti as a minority in 1993, backed by the work of music ethnologists, musicological research has the power and the relevance to initiate and influence political decisions.

#### **FOURTH DESIDERATUM:**

##### **RESERVING CERTAIN POLITICAL TERMS FOR THIS SPECIAL GROUP**

Out of respect for personal biographies one should reserve terms like "*verfemt*" to musicians hindered in their musical career by political reasons. To use the term for musicians like Franz Schmidt whose works were performed from 1938 until his death in 1939 is wrong; it does not imply an accusation of crimes but the clear distinction of Nazi-victims from non-victims.

A clear distinction between political reasons and other motives hindering careers would be correct. The distinction between a group politically persecuted and another one—criminals, people taking advantage?— does not correlate with any evaluation of just and unjust, with quality in musical works and personal lives. Clear distinctions of crimes due to political regimes presents different crimes from being confused. Balancing one crime with another in the rich scale of 20-century crimes does not make crimes equally or less important and does not spare us from the work of coming to terms with the past.

Research on exile should not start at a point when political persecution can no longer be denied but at a point as early as recognizable. The long awaited history of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (Hellsberg 1992: 502-505.) deals for the first time with its history in the Nazi period. This might have been prompted by an article published in the London *Times* in 1992 in which the orchestra was referred to as Nazi Orchester. However, it fails mentioning Felix Galimir, who already passed the audition in 1936, but was not accepted due to his Jewish family background.

Last but not least, some concern is expressed regarding the use of specifically Nazi-terms such as "*entartet*" (degenerate) in cultural critics to express disapproval.

#### **FIFTH DESIDERATUM**

##### **NO LONGER AUSTRIAN—A CONTINUATION OF RESEARCH IN THE HOST COUNTRIES**

The continuation of research takes place along two lines. One line is the musical history of the countries of immigration and the other one is the history of the countries to which they emigrated. If one compares the energy put into those two complementary fields of research one has to acknowledge that even European musicologists prefer to pursue the first line of study. (Cargnelli/Omasta 1993, Heister et al. 1993, Weber 1992)

Actually cultural transfer is almost unthinkable without exile. One of the roots of occidental music in Israel is the expulsion of Jews from Russia and Europe. Emigration assumed a positive dimension— something which can't be said without a bit of cynism. (Bohlman 1989 and 1992) Cynism reaches a rare peak when the governments of the musician's first home-countries appreciate them for their work in the countries of immigration.

For the musicians life after emigration meant persecution (in the Sowjet Union), the end of careers, the continuation of work or the adaptation and development of unknown talents (Béla Bartók). Even if the musical careers after emigration can be regarded as successful, even if emigration helped to build a new culture like in Israel, Southern and Northern America or Asia, it cannot be overlooked that the emigrants were extremely unhappy with their fates. Manfred Gurlitt, German conductor and composer who emigrated to Japan in 1939, wrote as late as in 1963: "The Nazi's victory on me is accomplished. I have been forgotten with all my former successes." He interpreted awards and honours given by the German or Austrian governments as signs of contempt.



Considering a generation of teaching German musicians all over the world who can be called responsible for cultural transfer: What does it mean for a culture like that of occidental art music outside Europe that it was founded or developed by teachers who would have preferred to pursue an entirely different career?

## SIXTH DESIDERATUM

### AUSTRIAN MUSIC HISTORY AFTER 1945

Even when tradition seemed to continue, when "everyday-life of music came to the Austrian concert-halls" in 1946 (Krones, *ÖMZ* 1/1995) tradition was only one undamaged thread in a destroyed rope. Writing on Austrian post-war music history seems to start in a year 0 and in many ways fails to recognize the connection with pre-war times. Observation of features, traditions and ways of compositions in contemporary music could be analyzed in terms of how they might relate to pre-war traditions. Who among the emigrants held a connection to Austria, who together with composers living in Vienna identified his style as an Austrian school—like Egon Wellesz. (Fig. 105 *Egon Wellesz with his wife Emmy and daughter Elisabeth in England*)

However, musicologists observed a certain musical scene in post-war Austria e.g. composers performed in the temples of "Hochkultur" like Konzerthaus and Musikverein or those who were awarded music prizes by the government. They rightly interpreted this as a continuation of ideologies between Nazi times and the post war period (Cerha 10/1990).

The question rises if continuation might not be interpreted as a revival of a prosecuted tradition in which only some factors had not changed—the audience, the surrounding musical field, the social status of the cultural event. Linked to this observation is the specifically Austrian cultural phenomenon of there not being histories on important art institutions. One reason for this might be the fear for touching Nazi-times. The Niederösterreichische Tonkünstlerorchester which has its origin in an orchestra for troops founded in 1939, still misses a history. Only recently has the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna began research and opened an archive. The Wiener Sängerknaben are also still lacking a history to date, presently a research project is being supported by the Ministry of Research and Culture.

Hellsberg's book on the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra lists the names of Nazi-victims but leaves out important information: Why were the remigrants Od-noposoff and Förderl not re-engaged as members of the orchestra even though they were already teaching in Vienna; were there any attempts to re-invite the emigrant members from the United States?

The musicologist's task is to understand Nazi history as a part of the history of Austrian art institutions. One of the proposals submitted for the celebration of the Austrian Millenium in 1996 was an exhibition of empty showcases. They could be filled with assumptions and considerations on what Austrian music world and musical culture is lacking due to persecution of music editors, of musicology, of string-players. Many features of Austrian music life—the often lamented lack of Austrian stringplayers, the comparatively late integration of the teaching of functional music at the Hochschule für Musik, the organization of the study of musicology, the lack of an economic music market—do have one origin in the political circumstances of Nazi time. One of the empty showcases could be filled with the numerous and uncountable attempts of remigrants to get their works performed and the successful efforts to discredit them and exclude them from musical life. (Tschulik 1993)

## SEVENTH DESIDERATUM

### IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT GERMAN MUSIC THAT MAKES IT EASILY ABUSED BY NAZI POLITICS?

The history of musical exile includes the history of research on exile. One of the most striking features in Austrian research in musical exile is the fact that primarily non-musicologists are researching. This approach puts the emphasis on exile in biographies and ignores the effects on music in exile.

The question in which ways musical exile differs from the exile of other arts and sciences leads to the assumption that German music culture—worldwide dominant and generally seen as "Western"—shows certain features one might

interpretate as corresponding to Nazi-politics. This view does not neglect characteristics promoting the contrary. Yet there is evidence that the concurring musical systems existing in the first half of the 20th century provided arguments for Nazi-politics which could be easily supported by a broad audience. Generally spoken, composers—if not of Jewish origin—had to adopt the music of a tonal system in order to have a chance to survive in Germany.

Ethnomusicologists know that the music of a society tells something about the structure of society, the values, the way of living together. There is some evidence that the system of tonal music—as used in central Europe from the seventeenth to the beginning of the 20th century—bears features of hierarchy and suppression. The fact that also other systems—the 12-tone-system as developed by Arnold Schönberg meant for the composer a demonstration of German power and dominance over other nations—does not necessarily contradict this observation. Obviously Schönberg passed on ideas of hierarchy to the 12-tone-system.

**(Fig. 106 Arnold Schönberg in USA)**

The compositorial system of tonality was most appreciated in German symphonic music. The conductor of a symphonic orchestra was identified as typical German; Pringsheim called Germany 1927 the "export-country for conductors" that has created a leading class for members of a musical profession. (*Das Tagebuch* 24/8/1927). The hierarchical structure of a tonica, dominating the dominant and the subdominant might be reflected in a hierarchical system of musical teaching. German teachers of composition—even including exiled ones like Klaus Pringsheim in Japan—used the theory of tonal music to claim a leading role beyond music. In order to document the political power of a musical system the following fact is quoted: until 1945 the most influential Japanese musicologists—influenced and backed by German teachers—were convinced that only by adapting German music a nation could play a leading role. (Pringsheim 1932)

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